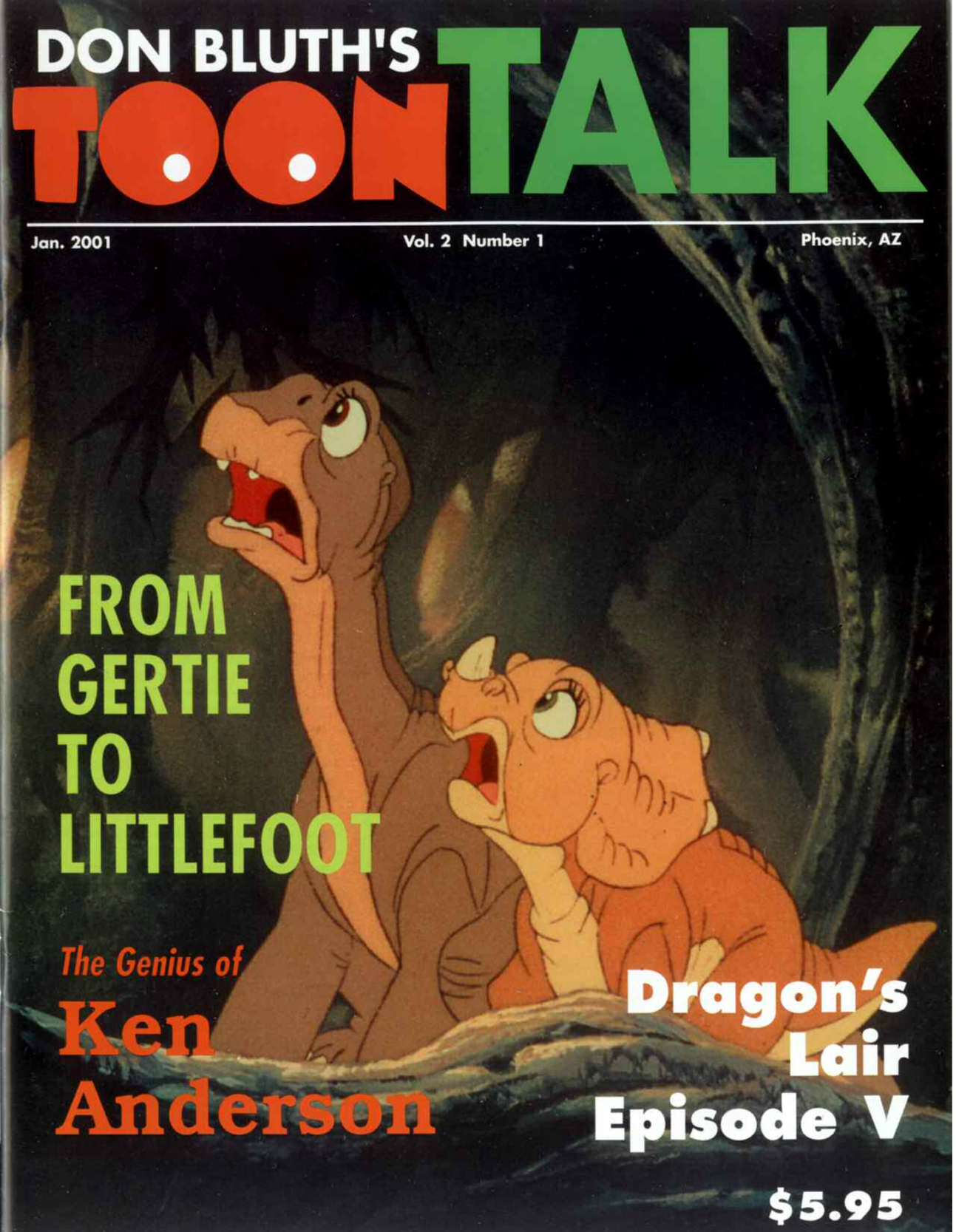
DON BLUTH'S TOON TALK

Jan. 2001 Vol. 2 Number 1 Phoenix, AZ



FROM GERTIE TO LITTLEFOOT

The Genius of
Ken Anderson

Dragon's Lair Episode V

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REVIEW

THE LAND BEFORE TIME

Kathleen Kennedy and Frank Marshall, executive producers on *An American Tail*, were nervously jotting notes in their Franklin Day Planners when Steven Spielberg entered the Amblin Conference Room. Gary, John, and myself, sat wondering why we had been summoned to this special meeting, and why all the secrecy? "Morning guys," Steven began, "*American Tail* looks great, and the response to the preview screening has been phenomenal. We'll keep our fingers crossed though, you never know with these things. Brad Globe, over in promotions, has come up with some quirky new ideas about merchandising tie-in's with McDonalds and Sears. If he pulls it off, that's millions of dollars in free promotions from those two companies. The whole world is going to know about Fievel the mouse, but now, let's talk about dinosaurs. People have a fascination with dinosaurs," continued Stephen. "You see, George and I have been trying to do this dinosaur movie, but with puppets. It's not really working out. The technology isn't there yet!" "George – who's George?" I asked. "Lucas," Steven said, smiling. "Anyway, I think we could do it as an animated piece. George isn't quite on board with the animation idea, but I think he'll come around. This could be really big, no pun intended. You guys want to do it?" Yes, was the only acceptable answer to his question. No, would require a good reason. Not that we would want to pass on the project. With *American Tail* almost complete, we were all, once again, facing unemployment, but there was this nagging feeling in my gut. Our entrepreneur days were gone. We had reverted to being hands for hire. My own vision for films was fading fast.

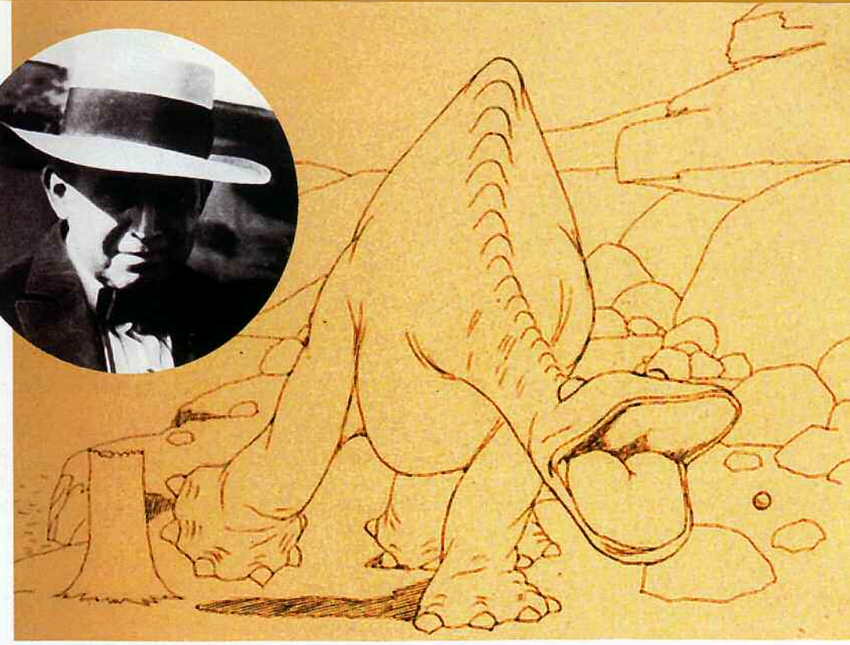
Two conflicting emotions ebbed to and fro in my head. The first, Steven's offering to turn our relationship into another picture, a good thing. Second, we left Disney to find autonomy, to craft our own dream on the screen.

Winsor McCay, c. 1925. A consummate draftsman. McCay was an undisputed master of both animated and print cartoons.

Steven had moved to the window where silhouetted against the morning sun, his features disappeared into his own shadow as he waited patiently for the answer. "Well," I began, putting on a brave face, "this must be kismet! Was it not Gertie the dinosaur who started the ball rolling; not Walt; not Mickey; but Windsor McKay and his Gertie? This dinosaur movie you're alluding to could be an encore of that grand moment." I was stalling and everybody knew it. "Dinosaurs will be a huge business," Steven whispered, mellifluously, "huge." A fleeting look from both John and Gary told me they were salivating for this deal and I better not blow it. Actually, it was a look that said, "Screw this up, Bluth, and you're dead."

Just then, the voice of my guardian angel, Freddy, who with practical eloquence, threw in his two cents worth. "You ungrateful, self centered, bohemian idiot," he shrieked. "Steven Spielberg is standing there, kindly offering you a chance to direct a second picture, this time with George Lucas and himself. Now stand up and thank him graciously and say, 'Yes,' instead of behaving like the selfish little clod that you are. Do it! Do it now!" I don't remember what I blurted out but the approximate affirmation must have been close enough for Steven. He shook our hands. "Let's meet next week to discuss the story." Adjusting his glasses, he moved towards the door. "You won't regret this," he said. "Oh," Steven suddenly turned back, "and one more thing, I want to get more involved this time; and George too. This will be so great! See you soon, guys."

The clod in me lost it. In the privacy of my own head, I threw a royal snit.

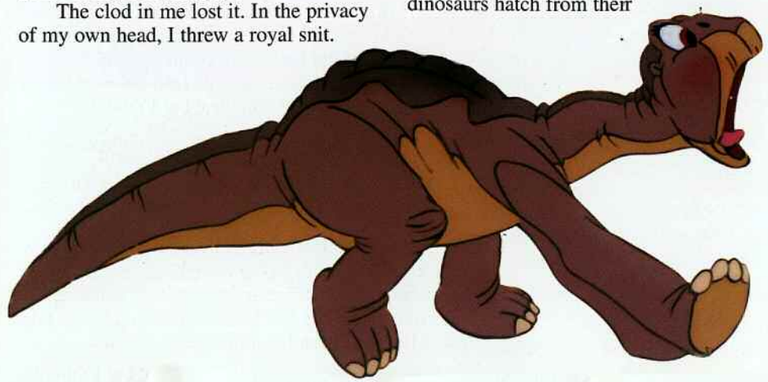


How lucky, how abso-bloomin-lutely lucky could I get? MORE INVOLVED! The two words killed me dead and the next two "George too," were kicking the corpse. I drove to my house, took two aspirins, and crawled into bed.

In the light of a deliriously happy new day, my dark side was back in the cage, once again, and reason restored to the helm. Our stroke of good fortune impacted our crew like an invitation to Mardi Gras. Spirits soared. Once again, the players assembled at Amblin Conference Room to advance to dino cause. Steven sat shoeless, tugging at his socks while sitting in his leather chez lounge. "We really don't have a script yet," he began. "We have a story, but it needs work. For that reason, I have hired Steve Kruger to take a pass at it. He's brilliant! I'm sure you guys will like him. Basic story is about five kids...I mean dinosaurs...all different, that get separated from their parents by an earthquake. Let's begin the film watching the five dinosaurs hatch from their eggs. Next, we follow their struggle to survive and maybe even build upon the little riffs they ignite amongst themselves." "Is there a villain," I asked timidly?

"Oh yes," he said, "the Rex. The Tyrannosaurus Rex chases the kids throughout the whole movie." "It seems a little sketchy, Steven," I began, "but what the heck, you are only a stones throw away. We will call a meeting if we get too lost." "I don't think so," he interrupted. *Empire of the Sun* begins shooting in Japan this month. Kathleen, Frank, and myself will be working over there. You can send your boards. I'll critique them and then you can make the revisions. Oh yes, make sure your people also send copies to George for his input. He and I will keep in touch by phone."

At this point, I was wondering how his "more involved" comment was going to happen. I felt just a tinge of disappointment at the sad news. The meeting trudged on. There was talk of *Fantasia's* imagery and the challenge of topping its breathless beauty. There was talk of working with George and his keen, unique sense of story. There was also talk of how this movie event would impact audiences, both young and old. Talk, talk, and more talk. Steven promised to get George to Los Angeles for a meeting before his own assignment in Japan. He did! George hardly talked at all. Somehow, I got the feeling he was still clinging to the puppet idea and now, we were taking it away from him. I felt sad, but I liked him right away.



THE SHARP TOOTH

The carnivorous Tyrannosaurus Rex bites, kills, and wolfs down his meal, but what of his lighter side? Somewhere, there must be a list of his endearing qualities. Someone must have seen it. Does anyone know? I wonder!

The classic four pillars of dramatic construction are hero, heroine, villain, and comedian. I was never sure what qualified the Rex as a villain. Was he deficient in kindness and mercy? No! Was he evolutionary arrested or retarded? No! Simply put, he was hungry. It is the law of nature to seek out food to satiate the appetite. So I reasoned, how could I hate the beast for doing what nature instinctively ordained? Just because he was big, growling and hungry didn't make him malevolent. He needed to step outside nature's boundaries to be a bad guy, embrace brutality over compassion, and harbor a vendetta or a grudge that could twist his soul into an unnatural existence. That would be a true villain. Creative ideas are born out of conflict. I wanted a more dimensional bad guy, but I was outnumbered, and finally caved in.

Steven and George, in fact, the whole team, felt that the Rex's teeth did the job. More evil could be over-kill. If something can bite you, that's reason enough to fear it. The dinosaur children, simply put, are terrorized by their natural enemy.

Although I knew our story would pack a dramatic wallop to the audience if they could hate Rex, not just fear him, I grew weary of pitching the idea. The most horrific villains are those who appear confident, cool, and in control at first glance, while beneath the skin, you sense something is terribly wrong, and you never suspect the magnitude of the twisted horror inside until it is too late.

The Tyrannosaurus Rex, now in color, was unusually dramatic. John, Gary, and myself set out for the meeting at 20th Century Fox's screening facility in London. The unveiling of our work was embraced, as expected, with grins, merry laughter, and even applause.

As the lights came up, so did Steven and George. "It's too scary," both remarked. "We'll have kids crying in the lobby, and a lot of angry parents. You don't want that," Steven said. "Believe me guys, you don't want that." "Let's meet at Elstree Studio tomorrow, they have an editing room there," suggested George. "Good," Steven agreed, "we'll tame it down and cut out some of the biting moments." John was speechless, Gary stunned, and I was in retreat, into my head, behind bolted doors.

Directing a movie is like birthing children. To see it rushed into surgery, even for commercial reasons, somehow fractures one's enthusiasm. On that day, nineteen fully colored Rex scenes were cut from the movie. I mourned for a week. Were Steven and George right to do it? In hindsight, I think, yes. *Land* grossed $72 million worldwide, and became one of the supporting pillars for the animation renaissance. Least you chose to forget, *Land Before Time* has been followed by six sequels, direct to video, that have generated in excess of $250 million.

That, you can't forget!

SPIKE: THE LOVE SPONGE

Although the five little dinosaurs would each have his/her own look, the more daunting challenge was finding an identity for each. Cera, with her irascible personality and vitriolic tongue, was an easy character to profile. Every family has one of these, the brat that against all reason and wise advice, tosses her curls and walks directly into harms way. Littlefoot, on the other hand, is the voice of reason, the pragmatist that tries to find all the answers to problems in his head. Since emotion plays such a big part in coming to terms with life, Littlefoot is bound for frustration. Although he is easy to like, he is not the best leader. Then there is Petrie. He can't fly, he's out of step with his own kind, a self-proclaimed weirdo, and he bellyaches his way through the movie. Next, there's Ducky, the small voice of hope. With her, anything is possible. "Yep. Yep. Yep." She chirps as she tags along, always the follower. At the end of the day, my favorite dinosaur is Spike. A pure soul, simple, accommodating, and eager to please: He is a character who never utters a single word, yet for me, speaks louder than all of the others. He is a standout like Dopey, who just wants to be loved. I found inspiration for Spike in Cubby, a little Chowhound I befriended at age ten. He was guided to our home simply because my dad thought he might be a good herd dog on the farm. Although these cows would be hard pressed to jump over the moon, leaping the farmer's four-foot barbed wire fence was a no-brainer, and I was taking flack from dad. It was a simple plan; keep the cows in their own field. The cows were our responsibility, Cubby's and mine. Though I can't swear by it, one afternoon, I thought I saw Cubby from a distance, plant himself between the fence and the herd to hold court, his head gesticulating as if he were laying down some kind of rules for the ladies, who in a moment or two, tossed their heads, flicked their tails, and walked away. The fence jumping stopped permanently. I put it to Cubby one night as he lay at the foot of my bed, "Tell me old boy, what did you say to them?" He threw me a glance with reprimanding eyes, and then wolfed out a few affectionate throaty sounds, "You know it's not allowed to speak in human tongue, you must listen to my eyes and read the wag of my tail. I said, don't mess with the kid, he's my buddy. Now, if one of you girls is thinking about jumping that fence, think again, because I'm going to bite your tail." I felt his wet nose burrow under my hand where he soon fell asleep. Keep your eye on Spike when you watch *Land Before Time.* He may look like a Spike Tail, but that is really Cubby, the Chowhound.

SPOTLIGHT on Ireland

It was in the fall of 1986 when I remodeled my house and re-landscaped both the front and back gardens that surrounding it. Removing the two 30-foot ash trees that had fragmented the city sidewalk was a financial "grunt" that reduced my savings to a pathetic whimper. Ah, but the neighbors liked it. The Tree Wizard Company turned out to be a traveling circus that rivaled even Barnum and Bailey. One clown even stole the show when he fell out of the tree. There's more. I added a fireplace, framed a bedroom, plastered the pool, and went on to refurnish all the hardwood floors.

It was in this same year that Morris Sullivan, CEO for the studio, announced that we were moving the studio from Van Nuys, California, to Dublin, Ireland. The yell that had began in my stomach, scrunched itself into a clod, shot upwards and out of my mouth, and easily rivaled Tarzan on his best day.

"We're what? But, but, I just.."

"We're going to Ireland," he said sternly.

"For how long?"

"As long as it takes."

"No! I can't!"

"No?" Morris stood up and leaned forward. "Correct me if I'm wrong here, but aren't you the guy who goes around saying that animation is worth it? You'll do anything? So here's the hoop. Start jumping."

Morris' Irish dander was up, his face reddened, his white hair stood high.

"I've got four cats, Morris, and what about Gary's two dogs?"

"We will take them with us. It's the only way. Universal wants us to make *Land Before Time*, but they're ignoring the inflation factor. We can't freeze the crew's salaries for two more years."

"Why Dublin?" Gary asked.

"Because the Irish government (IDA) will pay us grants for training their people in this business. Besides, it's a beautiful country. You're going to love it."

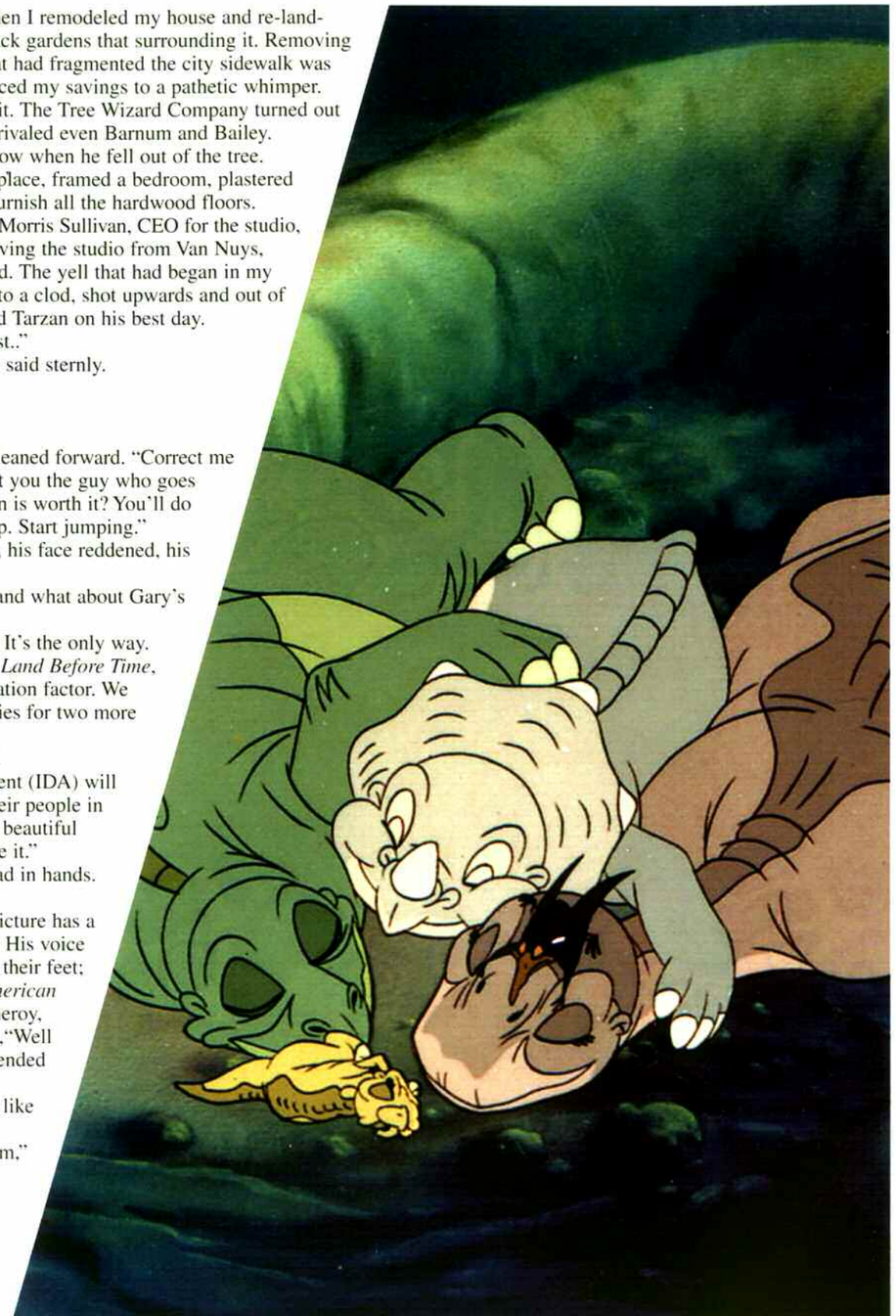
Morris sat; I joined him, head in hands.

"When?" I muttered.

"Just as soon as *The Land* picture has a green light from Universal." His voice was calm, "they're dragging their feet; they want to see how *An American Tail* will do first." John Pomeroy, ever the optimist, chimed in,"Well then, I guess we are in suspended animation," he laughed.

"Ha! Ha!" I snipped, "more like a coma?"

"Lighten up, I agree with him," Gary interrupted. "John is right.



HOME ON THE RIVER LIFFEY

Dublin is in the home of Phoenix Park, a vast expanse of neatly trimmed trees and manicured lawns. Statues and obelisks abound, and the deer roam freely. They say that the leprechauns, by night, paint the ten thousand shades of green that shimmer in the morning light, and at dusk, the splashing of the rivulets cascading over moss covered stones sets the mood for a lovers' stroll. Close by runs the River Liffey, where the long grasses wave their delicate, silent arms in the dappled shallows desperate to feel the lad's feet wading by.

There, the egret, standing stone-like on his log, watches in silent approbation. And there, on the banks of the River Liffey, where Cromwell's men, each night, did rest their heads in Irish, Catholic blood, then rise with the sun, eager to subdue the Gaelic spirit with her free-thinking children. There, on that enchanted spot, stands majestic and tall, a building of such grandeur that all who see it, give pause, and marvel at it's singular beauty. This edifice became our new home in Ireland. *The Land Before Time* would be produced here, in this, the land that time forgot.

The five little dinosaurs are merely sleeping. It's only a matter of time; we'll solve the money issues, wake them up and make the movie. So, don't be such a grouch. Besides the thought of seeing Europe is intriguing, don't you think?" Morris, now deep in thought, swiveled around to face us. "How many of your crew do you think will sell their homes and follow us? Without their commitment, we are dead."

In the back of my head, a mischievous small voice said, they'll all say no, and then we'll be off the hook. Not to worry. But in fact, eighty-seven Americans and Canadians stepped forward, and with them seventeen dogs and cats too! Oh Danny boy, the pipes, the pipes are calling.

We all arrived in Dublin on Nov. 14, 1986. It was the coldest winter in one hundred years, and to make us feel welcome, the airport in Dublin city lost all electrical power. That night the lights went out!

THE COLORS OF LAND

Mother dinosaur pulls Ducky from harm's way.

Petrie is the guardian of Littlefoot's tree star.

Sarah gets in an argument with Ducky.

Littlefoot and Sarah discover frogs in her swamp.

Ducky's there when Spike hatches out of the egg.

Ducky learns to forage for food underwater.

Sarah gets stuck in the tar pit.

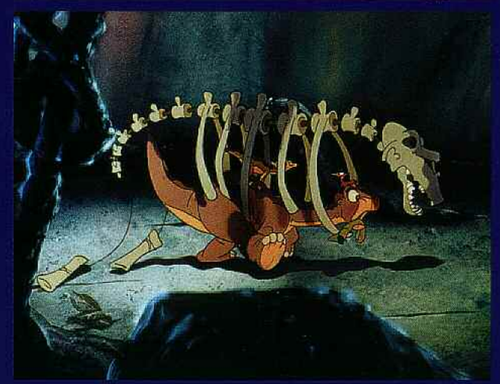
The Sharp Tooth discovers Littlefoot and Sarah.

The dinosaurs work together to find tree top food.

Sarah and Littlefoot are nearly devoured by Sharp Tooth.

The five little dinosaurs journey to the Great Green Valley.

Poor Petrie never learned how to fly.



Littlefoot get trapped inside the bones of a deceased dinosaur.

Littlefoot makes his way alone towards the Great Green Valley.

Sarah frightened and alone tries to find her friends.

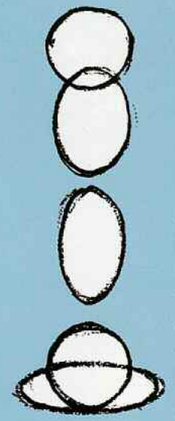
Finally the friends are reunited.

Shop Talk

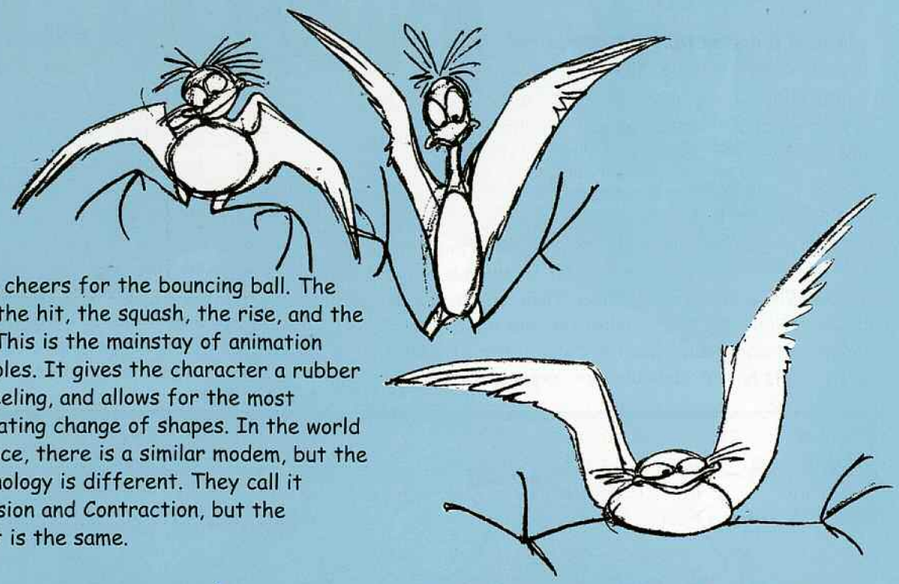
THE BREATH OF LIFE

There is a distinction that fares mentioning between moving a character around and animating one. Movement and animation are not the same thing. To animate implies giving your character a soul and a brain. Your audience will want to see him think and react. The discussion in the following pages deals with that challenge. As a character progresses from thought to thought or pose to pose, readability is essential. You must quickly get what he/she is doing. Often, the characters' attitude is not as simple as an expression of the face, but of the body language too. Think silhouette. Blackening in the interior lines will tell you if your design is strong. The silhouette should transmit the attitude.

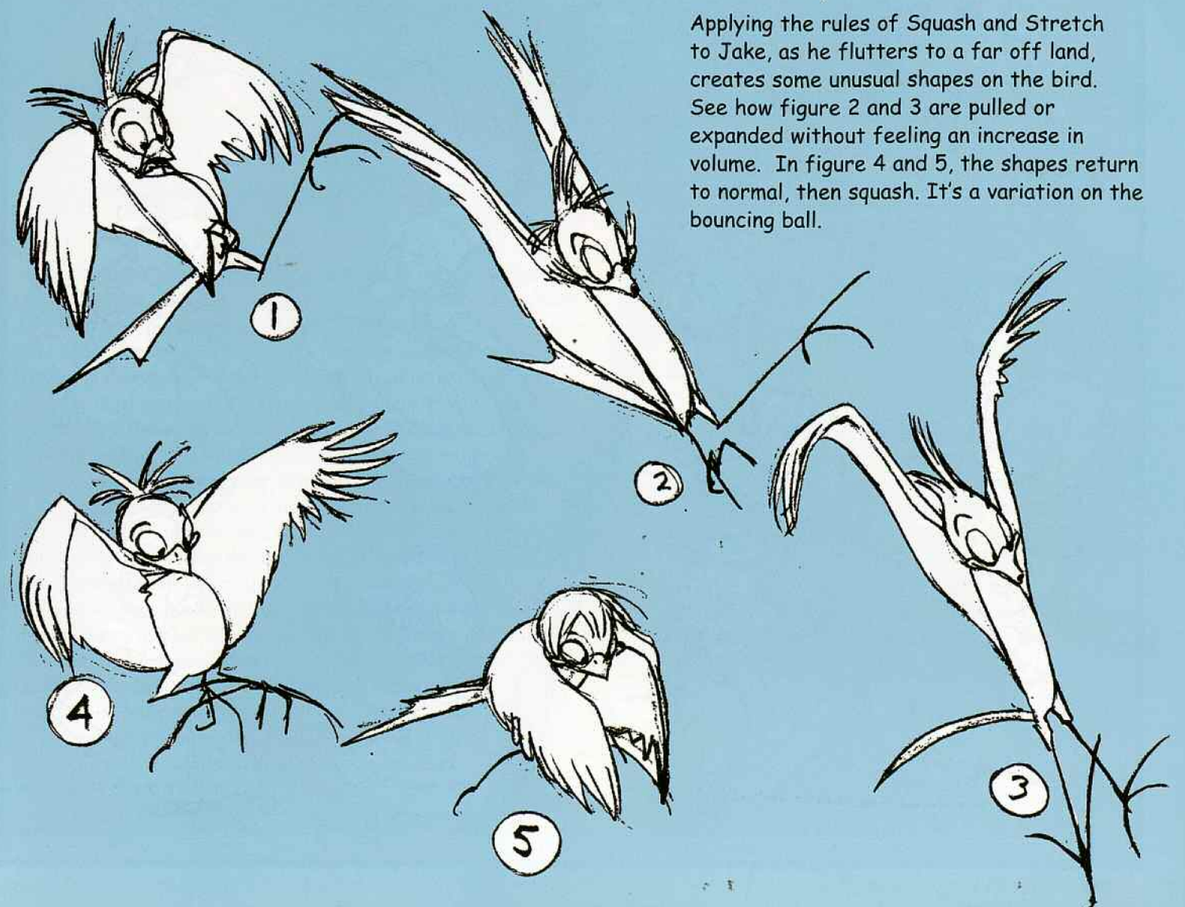
SQUASH & STRETCH



Three cheers for the bouncing ball. The drop, the hit, the squash, the rise, and the stall. This is the mainstay of animation principles. It gives the character a rubber like feeling, and allows for the most fascinating change of shapes. In the world of dance, there is a similar modem, but the terminology is different. They call it Expansion and Contraction, but the effect is the same.

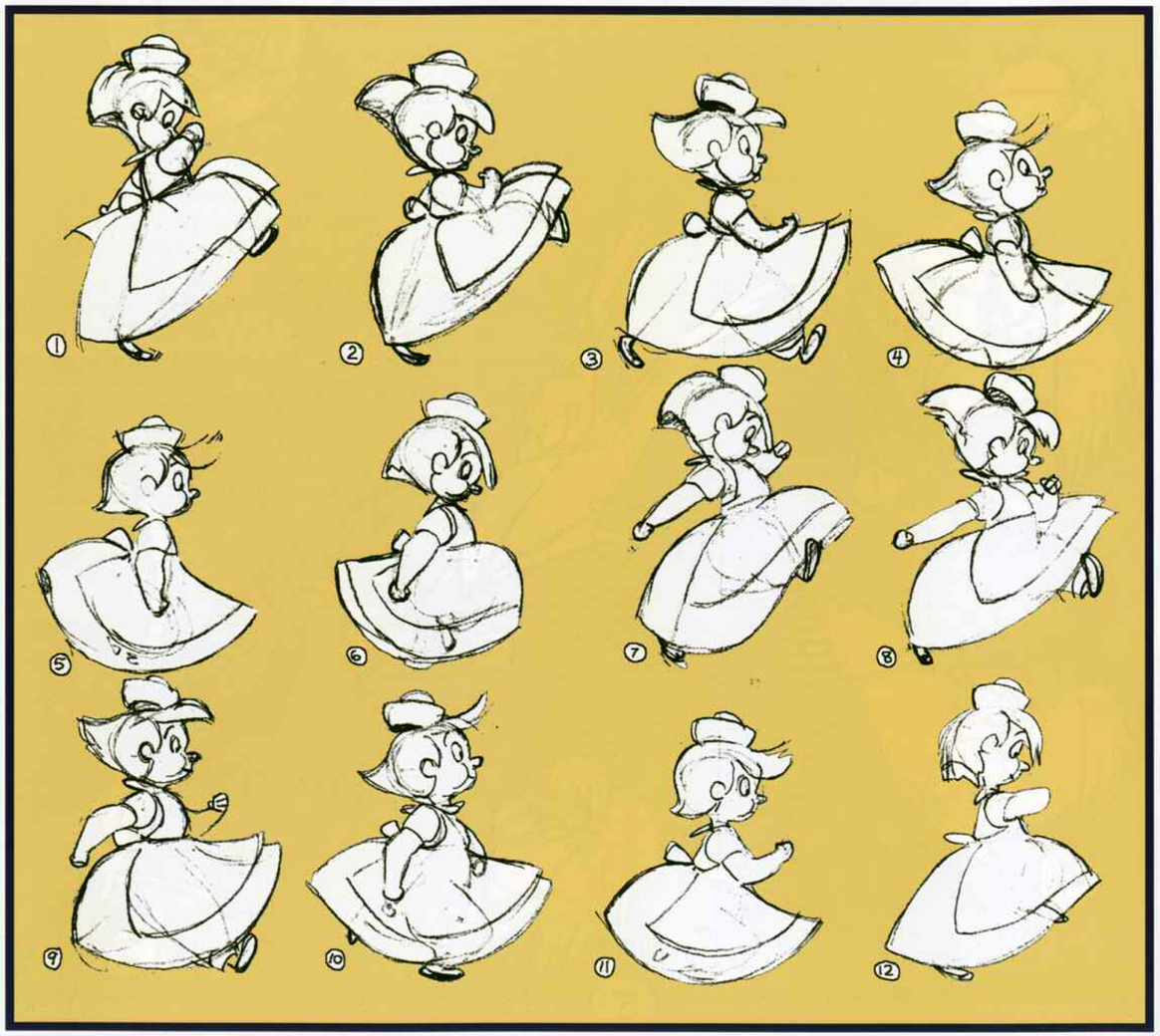


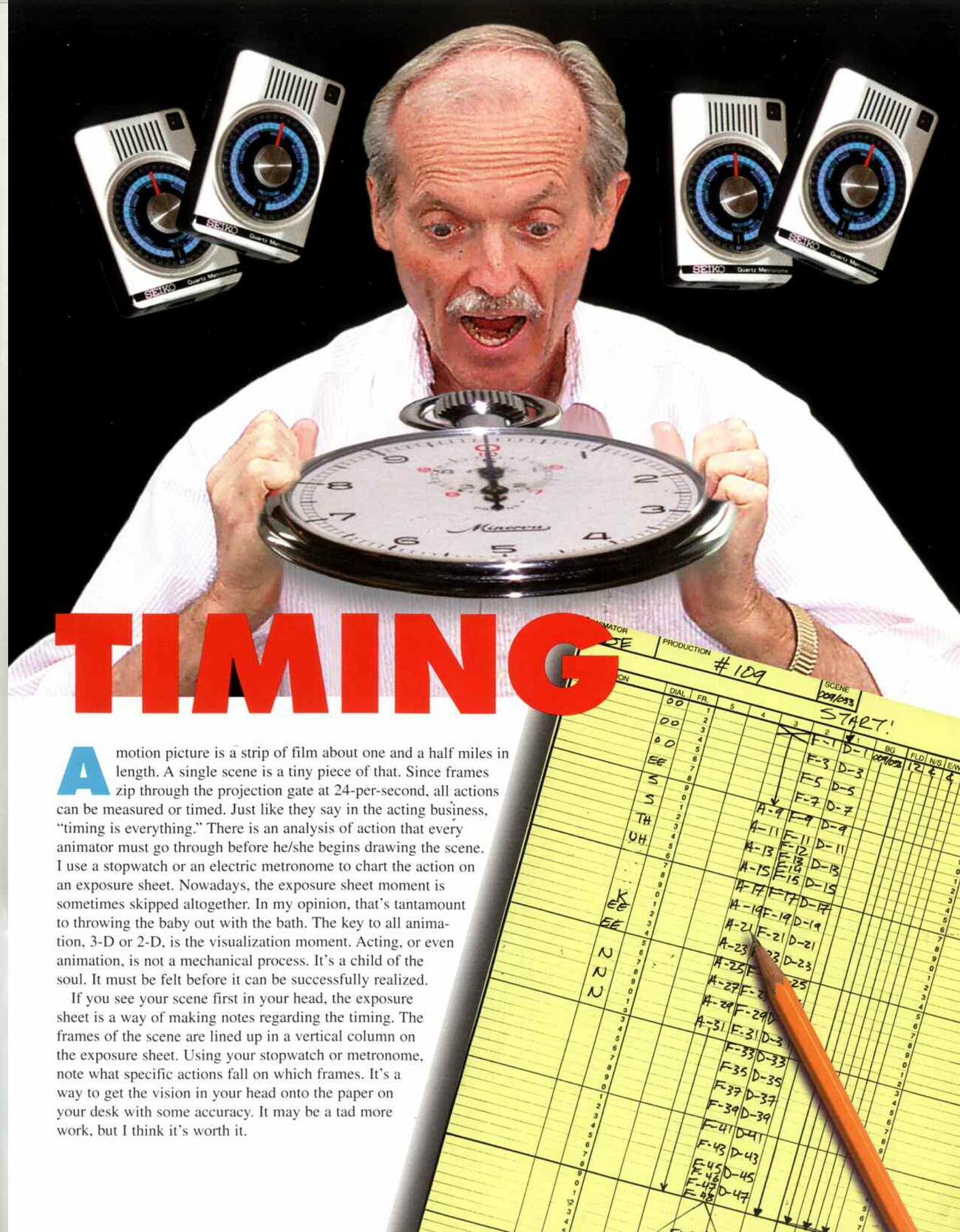
Applying the rules of Squash and Stretch to Jake, as he flutters to a far off land, creates some unusual shapes on the bird. See how figure 2 and 3 are pulled or expanded without feeling an increase in volume. In figure 4 and 5, the shapes return to normal, then squash. It's a variation on the bouncing ball.



OVERLAPPING ACTION

To illustrate this principle, I've chosen one of the schoolgirls from *Happy Prince.* All actions can be classified as either primary actions or secondary actions. The primary are the ones that have a life of their own. For example, the girl's body is filled with energy, legs, feet, arms, head, etc. They are working in concert to move her forward. Her clothes are tagging along for the ride and consequently, will drag behind a bit later. Their movements are secondary actions. Often secondary actions move in opposition to the primary ones. See fig. 2 and 3. The girl's left leg is headed downward while the skirt continues to move in an upward direction. This is also true of her head opposing the movement of her hair. Whether you work your drawings straightforward or use the in-between method, it's always best to work rough, and with primary actions only in the first pass. When you are satisfied that the primary action of the acting/action is what you want, then address the secondary actions on your next pass through the work. Secondary movements always feed off of the primary ones. Lay a strong foundation, and then build the house. That is just good sense. In all types of drapery the weight of the cloth is important. Gravity tugs at burlap differently than at silk.





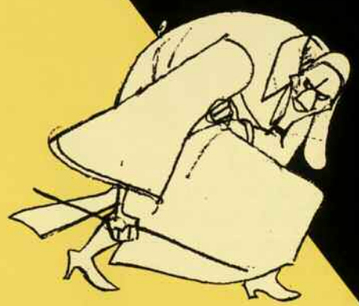
A motion picture is a strip of film about one and a half miles in length. A single scene is a tiny piece of that. Since frames zip through the projection gate at 24-per-second, all actions can be measured or timed. Just like they say in the acting business, "timing is everything." There is an analysis of action that every animator must go through before he/she begins drawing the scene. I use a stopwatch or an electric metronome to chart the action on an exposure sheet. Nowadays, the exposure sheet moment is sometimes skipped altogether. In my opinion, that's tantamount to throwing the baby out with the bath. The key to all animation, 3-D or 2-D, is the visualization moment. Acting, or even animation, is not a mechanical process. It's a child of the soul. It must be felt before it can be successfully realized.

If you see your scene first in your head, the exposure sheet is a way of making notes regarding the timing. The frames of the scene are lined up in a vertical column on the exposure sheet. Using your stopwatch or metronome, note what specific actions fall on which frames. It's a way to get the vision in your head onto the paper on your desk with some accuracy. It may be a tad more work, but I think it's worth it.

A-N-T-I-C-I-P-A-T-I-N-G . . .

The schoolmaster marches forward but suddenly stops to turn and face the children. He is annoyed and anticipates throwing his cane in the air, a gesture punctuating a dramatic moment. Well, anticipating the throw will probably be more chuck full of entertainment than the throw itself. It usually always works that way. Anticipation is where the tension resides. That's the "character thinking" moment. That's the fun of a scene.

Christmas Day is fun! However, the days preceding it, the ones building up to the big day, are far and away, more exciting. The tension, the hopes, the mystery, the poking and guessing about the gifts under the tree, are enough to drive you wild. You can't compete with your own imagination. The reveal always lies slightly under the anticipated. Use that principle in your scenes.



The audience loves to watch a character think. I believe this moment is the key to revealing the soul of your drawing. Be it heroic, villainous, or cute, the more the drawing schemes, plots, or plans, the better. The turning of the wheels is best revealed in the anticipation moment, not that you need tell the audience what the character is thinking - NO! Keep them in suspense about that. If you are going to titillate your audience, learn to use anticipation.

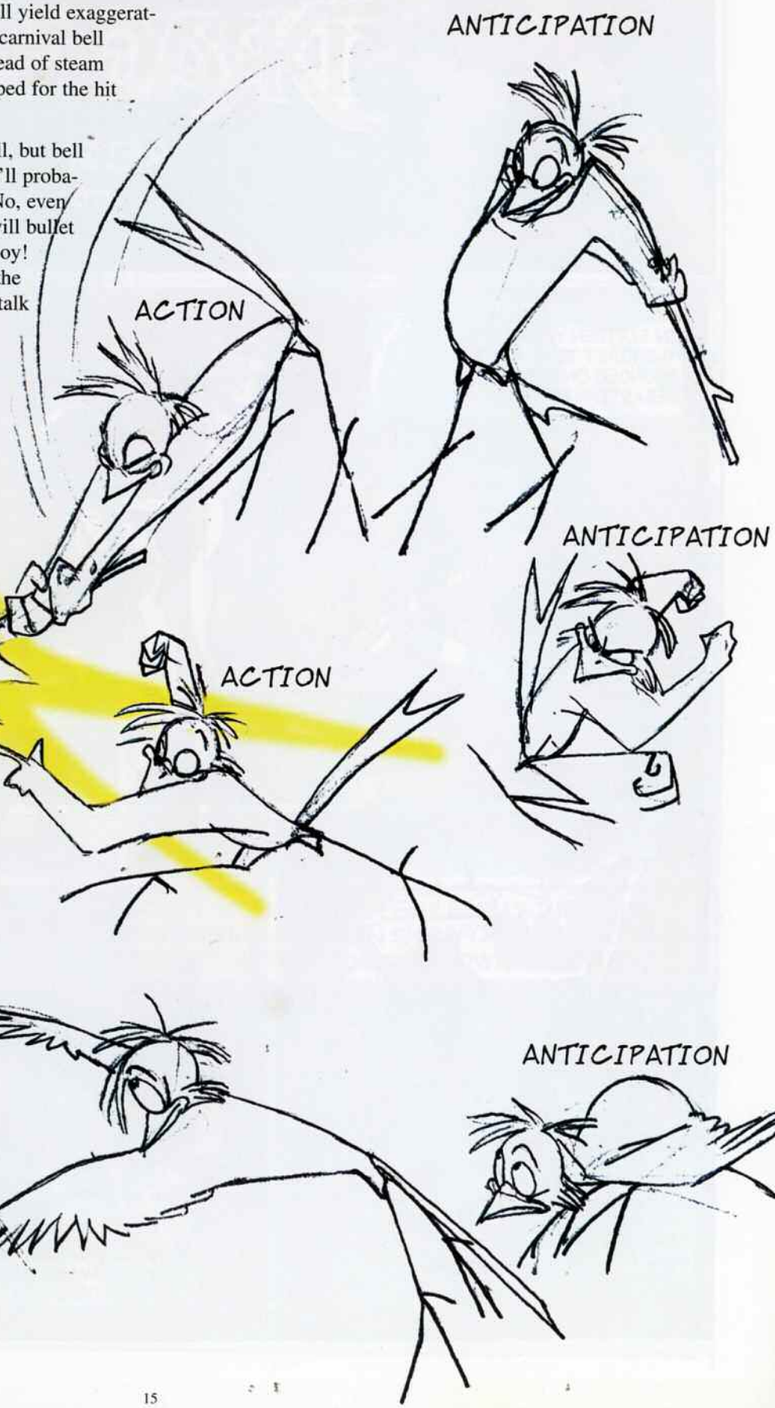
THE ACTION

Charting the anticipation is best done on the exposure sheet. Milk it for all you can. Exaggerated emotions will yield exaggerated dramatic impact. If Jake winds up to ring the carnival bell with a mallet, I would show him building up a head of steam with a determined look in his eyes. He's so prepped for the hit that he's even scary.

I'm anticipating that he will not only ring the bell, but bell and bullet will fly upwards with such force, they'll probably hit the American flag planted on the moon. No, even worse. Look at Jake's expression now; the bell will bullet clean through the moon and out into space. Oh boy! The capper, of course, is that all that fuss raises the bullet only a few inches off the ground. He's all talk and no show.

Jake winds up for a leap. He hops backwards, away from the target, flutters his feathers, pulls up his britches, and snorts through his nose. This is anticipation, big time! Suddenly two quick steps forward, then the leap. Will he make it? Absolutely not! He'll crash short of the target. Once again, he can't do it. What he does is just the reverse of what we anticipate. You may earn a laugh from the audience.

Next, there is the flight, which is Jake's *tour de force*. As he anticipates the take off with the same intense expressions, I'm assuming he will fail. The twist on this moment is that he doesn't. He surprises all of us. In the air, he's like an F-14 Tom Cat. He can out-maneuver even the hawk. Anticipation makes these comic moments work.



This episode focuses on the inciting incident of Dirk's adventure. Into everyone's life sooner or later comes the stranger who kicks you out of your comfort zone. Read on.

DRAGON'S LAIR

REIGN OF TERROR
EPISODE V

THE LADS STOPPED WRESTLING, IN SIXTEEN YEARS THIS WAS THE FIRST TIME ANYONE HAD POUNDED ON THE DOOR. SEBASTIAN FREAKED.

COULD IT BE VRAXXIS HAD DISCOVERED THE SECRET HIDING PLACE.

PERHAPS THE DRAGON GUARD STOOD JUST OUTSIDE THE DOOR.

THE OLD THIEF'S KNEES WERE KNOCKING LIKE CUBAN MARACAS AS HE CRACKED THE DOOR AJAR.

SEBASTIAN, POOR THING, LOST HIS COURAGE. FINALLY, DIRK BOLTED FORWARD TO UNLATCH THE SAFETY.

A LOOMING SHADOW FELL ACROSS THE COTTAGE. BUT STILL DIRK AND RONAN WERE DENIED A VIEW UNTIL...

DIRK PUSHES THE DOOR FULLY OPEN. SUDDENLY, THERE IN FULL VIEW, GLITTTERING IN THE SUN, STANDS...

LOOK AT THAT!

HOPE YOU LIKE FISH, SLUGS, TOADS, AND SNAILS.

A KNIGHT, DECKED TO THE NINES IN THE TRAPPINGS OF BATTLE. HE RADIATES ALL THAT IS VIRTUOUS IN MANKIND. ALL THAT IS WORTH-WHILE IN THE DEFENSE OF JUSTICE.

COULD YOU SPARE A MORSEL FOR A WEARY STRANGER?

THE LADS BECAME SPEECHLESS AS THE GALANT FIGURE OF A MAN IN SHINY CHROME-LIKE ATTIRE MOVED WITH BOLD GRACE TOWARDS THE TABLE.

SITTING DOWN IN METAL ARMOUR WAS A CHALLENGE FOR THE MASSIVE WARRIOR. RONAN GAVE A HAND, WHILE DIRK COULD NOT TAKE HIS EYES OFF OF...

THE SWORD. NEVER IN HIS LIFE HAD HE SEEN SUCH A SCRUMPTIOUS SOLID GOLD THING.

DONT' EVEN THINK ABOUT IT, LAD!

NO ONE TOUCHES MY SWORD!!

YEP! NO DOUBT ABOUT IT DIRK WAS HOOKED.

BUT SO WAS THE ENTIRE FAMILY. THEY HUNG ON HIS EVERY WORD.

AT PRESENT A MONSTER KING, VRAXXIS, SITS ON THE THRONE. THE TRUE HEIR WOULD

BE SIXTEEN IN A FORTNIGHT, AND ACCORDING TO PROPHECY...

YES... WHAT WILL HAPPEN?

HE WILL KILL VRAXXIS AND RECLAIM HIS BIRTHRIGHT.

THE KING HAS BEEN SEARCHING FOR THE ROYAL YOUTH FOR SIXTEEN YEARS. NOW HE IS DESPERATE; HE PUNISHES THE PEOPLE.

HOLY TOMATO! THIS GUY IS FOR REAL. I'LL BET HE'S BUMPED OFF A FEW DRAGONS.

THANK YOU KIND SIRS. NOW, I MUST BE ON MY WAY.

TO WHAT CAUSE?

TO THE CAUSE OF DESTRUCTION.

THE DESTRUCTION OF VRAXXIS. YOU LADS MIND YOURSELVES. NO ONE SIXTEEN YEARS OF AGE IS SAFE.

I'LL FETCH YOUR HORSE.

HANG ON. I'LL GET IT.

D'YA EVER GET THE IMPRESSION OUR LIVES ARE A LITTLE BORING?

YEAH, I'M GETTIN' THAT FEELING.

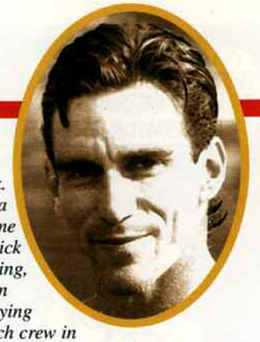
I, SIR GILGUD, FOLLOW THE KNIGHTS OF THE CAUSE. MAY THE TRUE HEIR TO THE THRONE RETURN VICTORIOUS.

DON BLUTH 2000

. . . to be continued

The Pitch

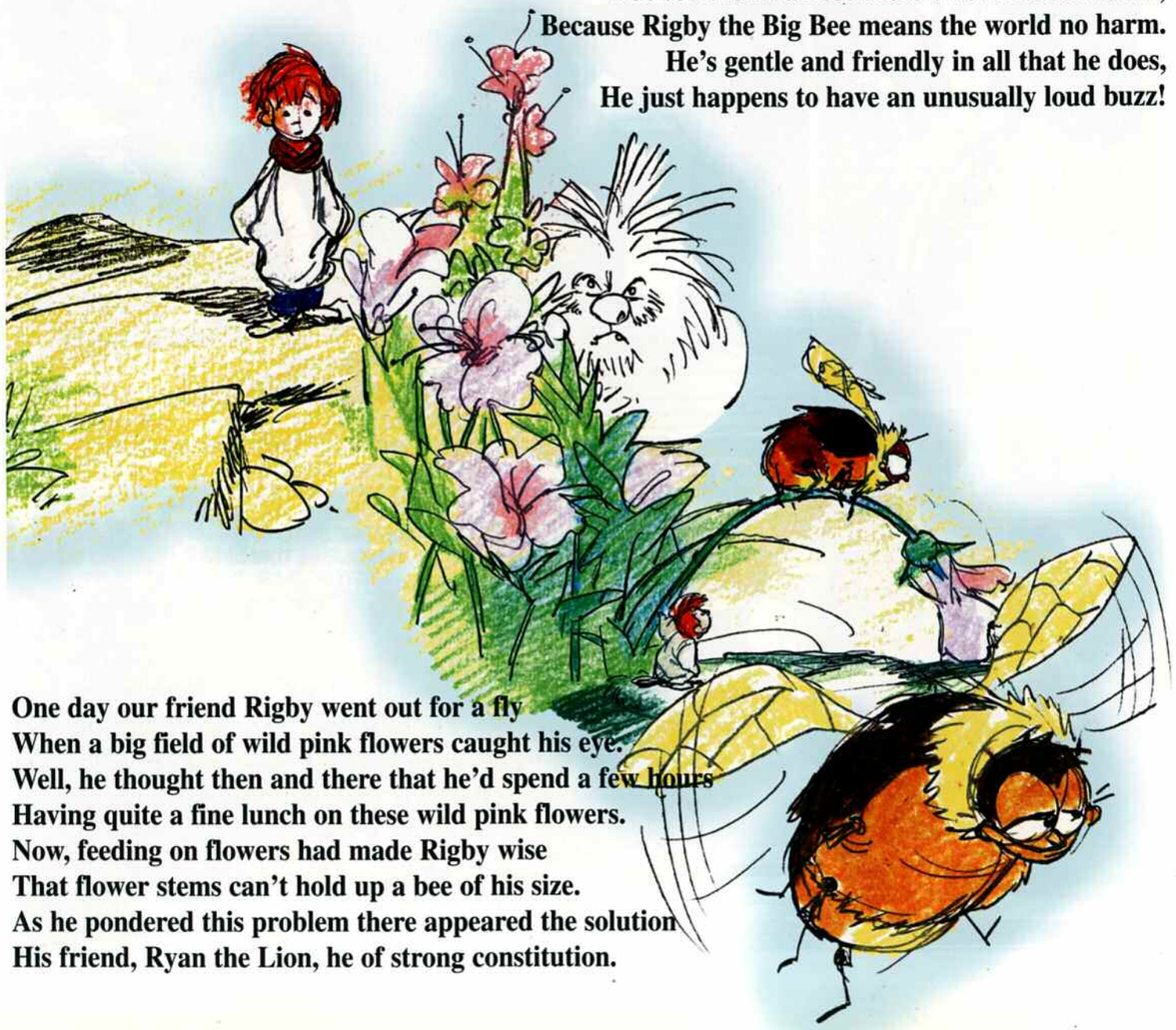
Rigby The Big Bee



During the press junket for TITAN A.E., *I met Scott Spizer in New York. He was pitch-hitting as a sound technician for some other guy that was out sick that day. During the taping, I was focused on my own dialogue, so I wasn't paying much attention to the tech crew in the room; but the "heads up" happened that afternoon as I was leaving the hotel. There was a note left at the front desk from Scott, thanking me for a great day. That's unusual, I thought. When I arrived back at Phoenix, I rang Scott to thank him. It was then that I found out that his hobby is writing. Here's a sample of his work. See what you think.*

Rigby the Big Bee is a wonder in flight,
A 100-pound bee – what a wonderful sight!
No one understands how he stays in the air,
It's as if you put wings on a lion or bear.
But fly Rigby does in his own unique style,
Wearing yellow and black, and always a smile...
At first when folks see him, well, some are afraid,
When they realize a bee has just put them in shade.

After all, he's not made the way most bees are made;
He weighs five pounds more than my grandmama weighed!
But soon folks all see there's no need for alarm,
Because Rigby the Big Bee means the world no harm.
He's gentle and friendly in all that he does,
He just happens to have an unusually loud buzz!



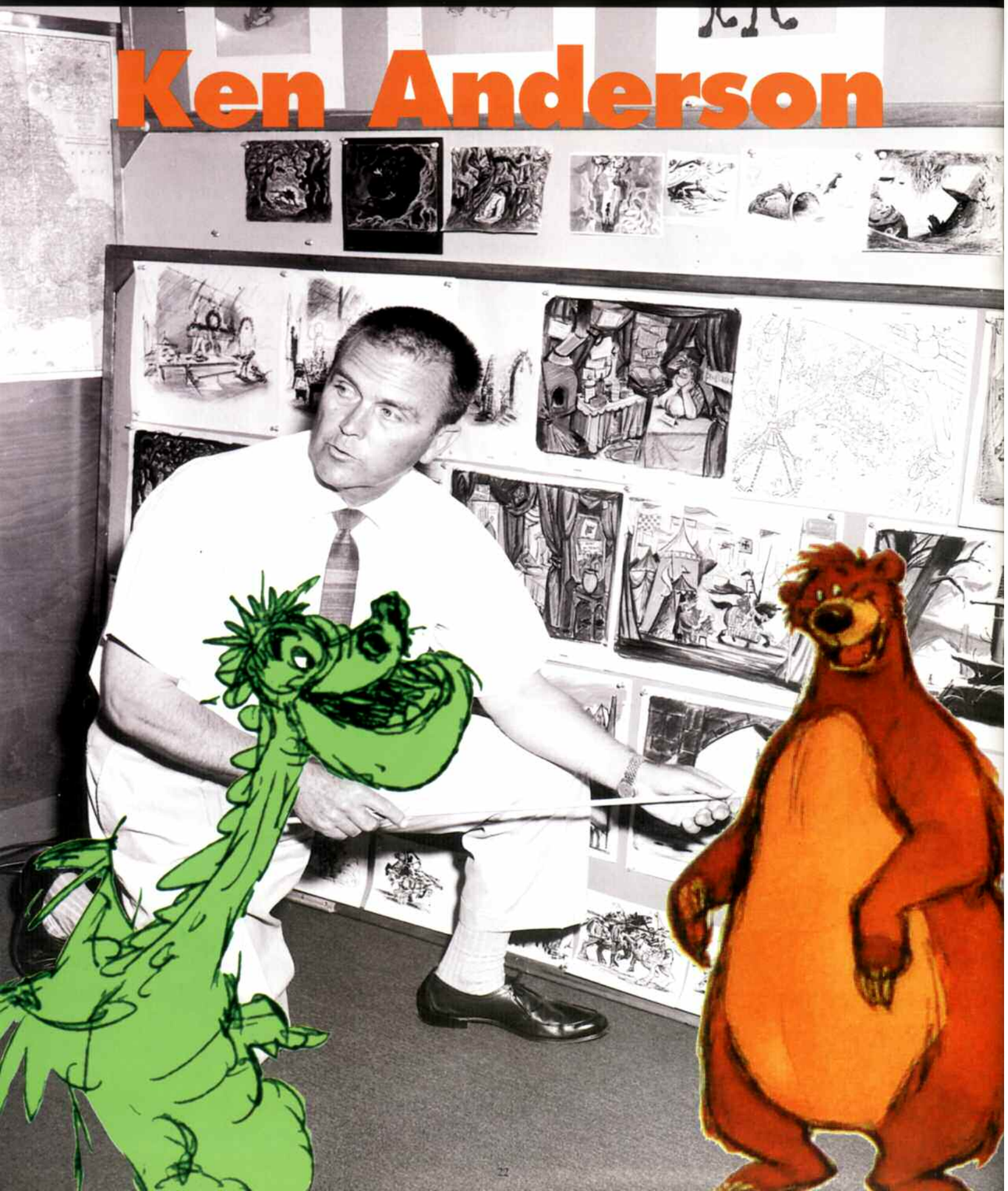
One day our friend Rigby went out for a fly
When a big field of wild pink flowers caught his eye.
Well, he thought then and there that he'd spend a few hours
Having quite a fine lunch on these wild pink flowers.
Now, feeding on flowers had made Rigby wise
That flower stems can't hold up a bee of his size.
As he pondered this problem there appeared the solution
His friend, Ryan the Lion, he of strong constitution.

So he called down to Ryan, "Could you give me a lift
In return I can offer a very sweet gift..."
Well, Ryan loved sweets so he quickly said, "Sure!"
Then lay down on the ground and held out his left paw.
Rigby then landed on the paw of his friend,
Who's leg held old Rigby without even a bend.
"Now do as I ask," said Rigby to Ryan,
"And we'll have a feast fit for a bee and a lion."
So when Rigby said "Up," up Ryan's paw went,
And when Rigby said "Left," that's where he was sent.
finally, rigby called out, "Now, steady as she goes,"
Because the batch of pink flowers sat under his nose.

Rigby and Ryan then proceeded to dine
On wild flower pollen that was truly divine.
By the end of this feast these two could agree
That there's no better team than a lion and bee.

WIZARDS *of the* BIZ

Ken Anderson



In 1991, Michael Eisner and Roy Disney Jr., officially bestowed upon Ken Anderson, the illustrious title of "Disney Legend." Ken would have blushed upon receiving such an honor. I knew him as shy and unimposing, and he would never presume to actually be called a legend. He liked to think of himself as just a guy in the art game slugging it out, but I think he knew deep inside that he was a bird of rare plume. There was an impish grin always challenging those in the room to a friendly idea duel, as if to say, "Come on, let's see what you've got." The sparring for excellence was never about besting another artist, but always about mining for the million-dollar idea. What a kind and caring man he was, and those who worked at his side during his 44-year Disney career, recall his quiet creative power with awe. "Yep," most agreed. Disney "legends" hits a bit below the mark. So how did he touch my life? Well, in 1977, Ken had created a loveable green dragon with a scruffy mop of pink hair on his head. Elliot was his name. He was created to star in the combination live action/animation film, called *Pete's Dragon.* Whenever Ken spoke of the charming reptile, his grin broadened and his eyes sparkled. There were also small anecdotes that he weaved into our conversations, stories that sounded like Elliot, the dragon. Elliot came to be from an old school buddy that Ken had known for years, and he was merely recalling details from factual history. Oh, how I fell under the spell of Ken's words. He also had a keen wit that he pitched at you when you least expected it. For example, during a very high ranking story meeting on *The Rescuers,* with Woolie Reitherman presiding, and Frank Thomas, Ollie Johnston, John Lounsbery, Ken Anderson and Milt Kahl doing back up. I was the only rookie in the room, and I was there to listen and learn. They were discussing Bernard's motivation as the hero in trying to escape the crocodile as he was trapped in the organ pipes. All of the guys thought and thought, and scratched their heads, but finally settled for a simple solution. Bernard was just trying to survive.

I wasn't convinced and could keep still no longer. "Survival isn't much of a motive." I said. Ken shot me a look. "Oh yes it is," he grinned, "you'll see. Wait 'till you've worked here at the studio a while." The meeting broke up with laughter. Later I felt his hand on my shoulder. "I'm sorry," he said, "but that was an excellent straight line. I hope I didn't step on your toes. I couldn't resist it. Those men in that room are all survivors and that's the comedy, and also the tragedy of that moment back there. This is a tough business, you'll learn that, Don, but for now, let's go make *Pete's Dragon*." Later, he introduced me to Don Chaffey, the live action director, who was an intense man with an English accent and the face of Baron Munchausen, waxed mustaches and all. They were long and so were his stories, which flowed as freely as his breathing, recaps of his perilous courtship with directing movies, all slightly off color. His firm handshake revealed he was indeed, a soul mate in the arts, and we were destined for adventure. When Ken introduced me as Director of Animation, it must have startled the good Englishman for he paused in silence and starred a moment, then bellowed with laughter, "Oh that's a relief, I was afraid I was going to have to draw all those bloody little dragons myself. Good show, shall we move it out?" Ken leaped on the opportunity. "Let's talk about Elliot's dialogue." "What dialogue?" Mr. Chaffey returned. "He's a nice quiet little dragon, well behaved." "Yes," Ken continued, "but what if we gave him some sounds, you know, gibberish? No, no, not gibberish. A language, a dragon language, but not English." "I might take offense at that!" Chaffet snapped. "You know what I mean," Ken said, "he needs an identity, a mischievous nature. Look, I know this guy, an actor named Charlie Callas. He can do amazing things with his voice. We have a real opportunity here. It could catch on. Think of it, 'Dragon Talk,' do you know what I mean? Kids all over the world would be speaking like Elliot." "That's a very scary thought," Chaffey murmured, stone faced. "What do you think, Don? Would it help the animation?" "Me?" I responded. "You're asking me?" "There are only three of us here!" he snapped. "Yes, I'm asking you, speak up!" "Well, I think it's a great idea, and yes, the animation would be better; I trust Ken's instruction, he's been doing this sort of thing for years, even before I was born. I'm signed on. You won't regret it, believe me, he's great!"

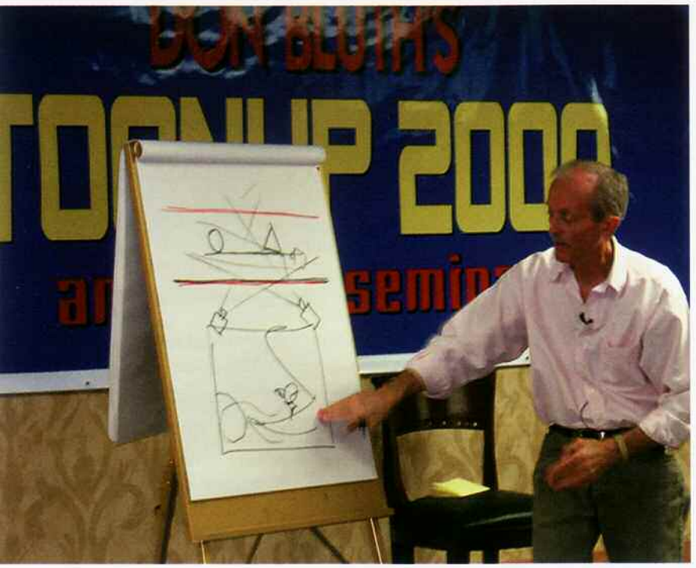
"Okay, okay, relax, I believe you" he interrupted. "You know, Elliot was originally supposed to be invisible, like Harvey, the rabbit. Now, he not only appears in the movie, but you, Ken, want to give the bloody reptile a voice. I've got a headache. I'm going to my trailer." "Holy tomato!" I said to Ken as Mr. Chaffey marched off. "I believe we stirred his jello." "Don't mind him," Ken laughed. "That's his English sense of humor. We're here to make a great movie; Chaffey is a pro. He's on board with that."

Now, just in case you don't know this, in the making of a combination picture, the live action is always shot first, and the actors are driven to despair trying to leave a space for animated characters they can't see; they will be drawn in later. If Elliot is thirteen feet tall, he needs headroom in the frame; or when Pete looks into Elliot's eyes, where do you tell the actor to look given that on the set there's only a pretend dragon. Ken seemed to sense intuitively when the director, Don Chaffey, the cinematographer, and myself had made an error in judgment. He would motion the three of us over to the storyboard, and politely suggest we re-figure the scene with words like, "You've only left room for the dragon's feet, guys, Elliot should be dancing in this scene: Make it a wider shot."

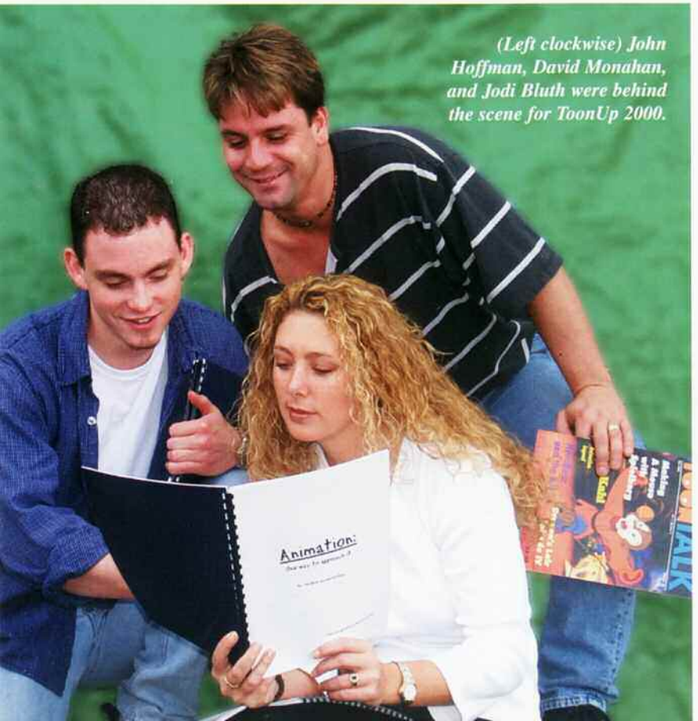
Ken was always the master, but what made it so fantastic was he never made you feel like an apprentice. To him, you were an equal. It was a given that one day you would stand even taller.

On at least one occasion, I tried to thank Ken for his generosity as a teacher. He always smiled and brushed it aside with, "I appreciate you saying that, but if you are learning something, it's really you, not me. The burden is always with the student. I'm just glad I can answer your questions." Great artist? Absolutely! But maybe that's because he was such a terrific guy. I'll never forget.

TOON-UP 2000



Don Bluth gives a very animated demonstration.

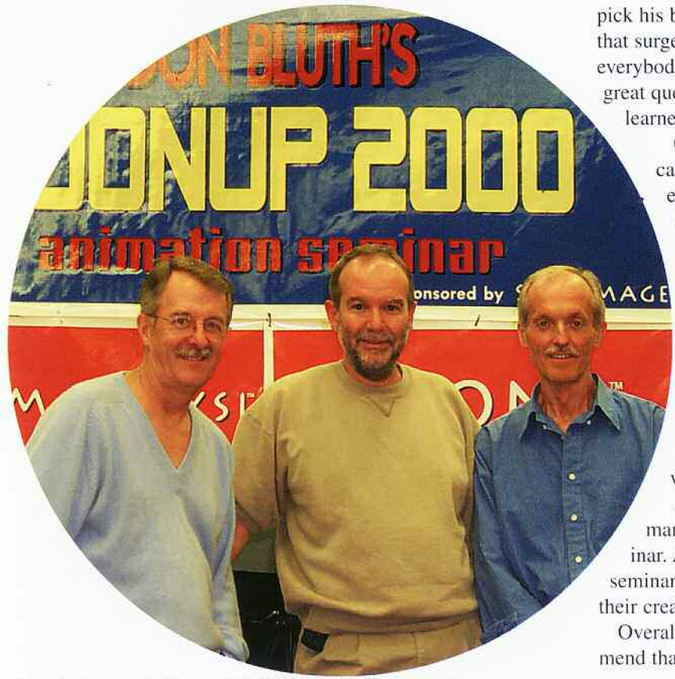


(Left clockwise) John Hoffman, David Monahan, and Jodi Bluth were behind the scene for ToonUp 2000.

Monday morning, oh how much we love thee. Unfortunately the law of Monday morning-induced dreariness is a universal constant that even the animation industry cannot escape. We returned the previous night from **Don Bluth's Toon-Up 2000**. The flight was delayed. In-between yawns and rubbing the sleep from my eyes, I was mulling over the weekend's activities as the rest of the crew dragged themselves into work, apparently enjoying the morning as much as I was. The smell of coffee percolating filled the air as I started to think how to approach my latest assignment. Was it an animated scene perhaps? Will I get to utilize some pearl of knowledge that was bestowed upon me in Don's seminar? Nope, I'm afraid not. Using those gems will have to wait for another day. I have been given the task of writing an article on the **Toon-Up 2000** seminar. I feel like I'm back in school, having to write a report on my summer vacation. Oh well, at least I won't have to stand up in front of the class and read it out loud. I'm tired enough as it is, and I don't need another sleepless night as when I am revisited by some prepubescent nightmare where I walk into school wearing only a well-placed textbook. The two-day event was held at Spectrum Studios in Culver City, California, a great facility with a wonderfully helpful crew. Most of the set up was done on Friday as we all eagerly anticipated what lied ahead the next day. Not only did I look forward to what Don was going to say, but I also looked forward to meeting the people that had traveled to see the seminar. We had a diverse crowd. Not only were there people from Los Angeles, we also had people join us from San Francisco, Canada, Italy, Mexico City and Japan. It was great to hear everyone's stories and what was going on in their part of the animation world, be it 2-D or 3-D.

The first day of the seminar, Don talked about drawing, character design, and animation. I have always been a big fan of Don's character designs, and it was interesting to see what his thought process is that leads him to a final design. His explanation of the principles of animation was precise and to the point. I was more interested in his thoughts on bringing the characters to life, and how he accomplishes this. He was quite adamant that we should all strive to make our characters live and not just move. Already I was inspired to rush home and start creating. Unfortunately, this would involve a taxi ride back to the airport (always a dangerous endeavor) and a flight home so, I stayed in my seat and continued to listen intently. Don also kept the floor open to questions at all times. This helped provide a very close, and personal learning environment for the 100 plus people that were there. The first day was very informative and I looked forward to the second day. On Sunday, Don started day two with acting. Again, there was more talk about how we are to bring these characters that we animate to life and not just move them around. Don recommended that we all should take acting courses. These would be invaluable in helping us convince an audience that a character is alive. Next, we moved to storyboarding. It was great to see how he approaches boarding a scene and getting an insight into how he likes to stage them. His staging has always intrigued me, and it was nice to finally see first hand how some blank pieces of paper become the building blocks of an animated film. Lastly, we got to directing. I enjoyed hearing from his perspective what it requires to be a director, and what some of the day-to-day problems are that directors have to deal with. At the end of day two there was a question and answer period where we could just pick his brain. (In case you're wondering and have ever watched that surgery show on *The Learning Channel*, his brain looks like everybody else's. You know, that weird pinky-gray color.) Some great questions were asked, and I think the entire audience learned a lot.

Spectrum Studio, Los Angeles, hosted the first seminar.



From left, Gary Goldman; Bob Shafron of SoftImage, sponsor of ToonUp 2000; and Don Bluth.

Overall, the seminar was great; not only was it technically informative, but Don peppered the two days with entertaining anecdotes from his past 45 years in the animation industry. Let's face it, nowadays this is about as close as you can get to learning from the "Nine Old Men," (The "Nine Old Men" were a group of very talented animators that were named by Walt Disney back in the Golden heyday of animation.) Don learned from these guys, and now he's passing it on to us. There were also some extra goodies for the crowd. Not only did we get to spend two days in an inspiring learning environment, we also received delicious, catered lunches. I don't know who those caterers were, but man, those were some good eats.

An animation book was also handed out that contains many of the subjects that Don covered in the two-day seminar. After talking to a number of people who attended the seminar, I got the impression that many were leaving inspired, their creative batteries recharged. I know mine were.

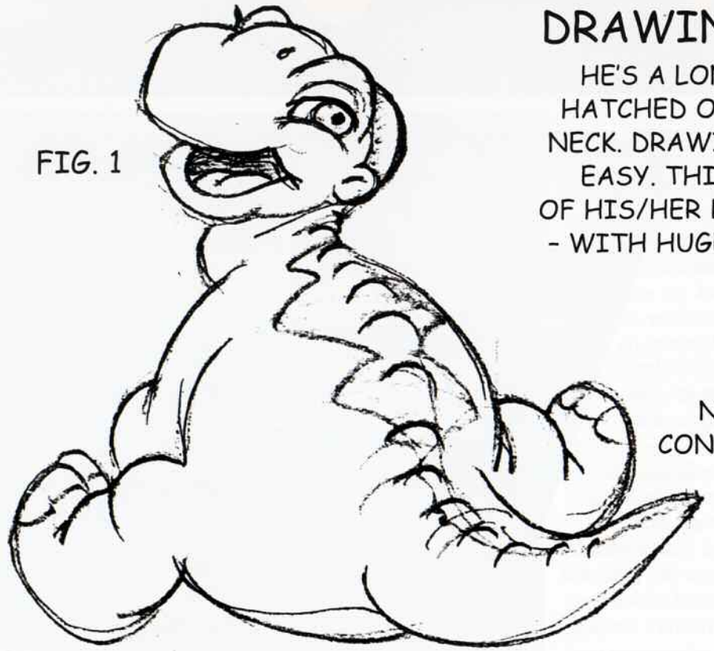
Overall it was a great experience and I would highly recommend that you sign up when the next seminars are announced.

JUNIOR TOONERS

DRAWING LITTLE FOOT

HE'S A LONGNECK, RIGHT? BUT JUST HATCHED OUT OF AN EGG, HE HAS NO NECK. DRAWING A CUTE CHARACTER IS EASY. THINK OF A BABY. EVERY PART OF HIS/HER BODY IS SOFT AND ROUND - WITH HUGE EYES, A WIDE FOREHEAD AND A STUBBY NECK.

FIG. 1



NOTE THAT THE INFANT IS CONSTRUCTED WITH A SERIES OF CIRCLES AND CURVES.

FIG. 2

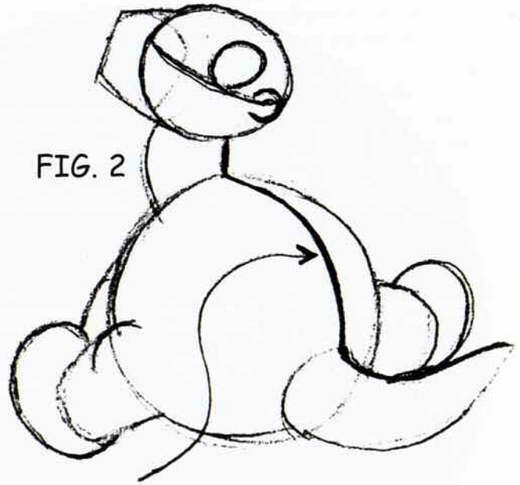
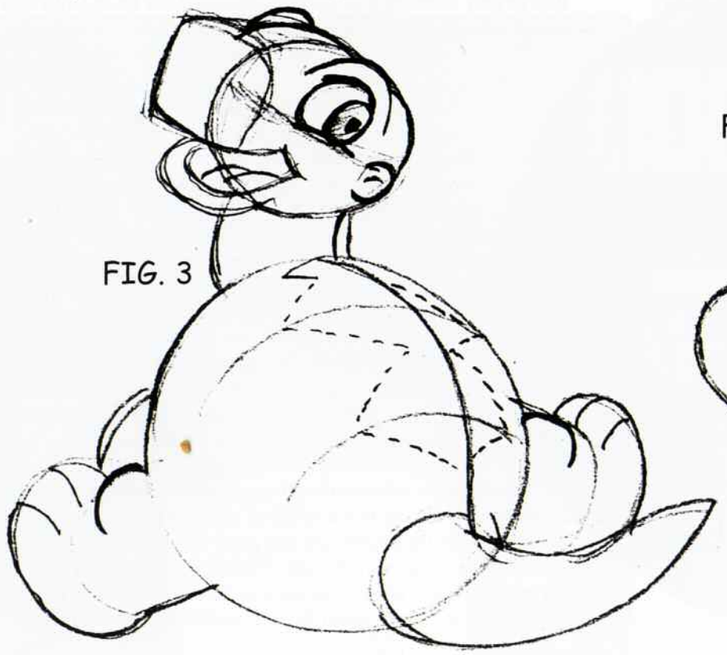
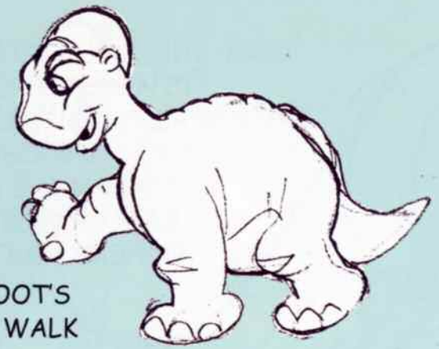


FIG. 3



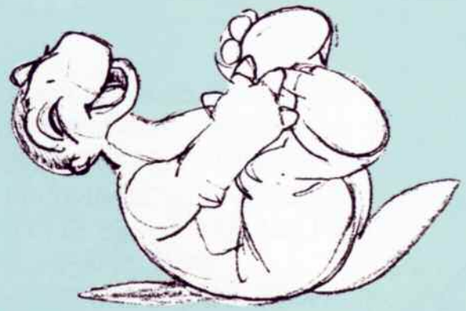
FINDING THE SPINE LINE IS CRUCIAL TO YOUR DRAWING. NOTICE THAT IT IS IN VIEW ON HIS BACK BUT DISSAPEARS BEHIND HIS SKULL.

NOW DRAW THESE . . .



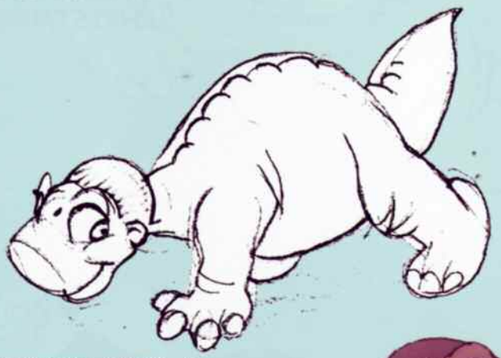
LITTLEFOOT'S NORMAL WALK

LITTLEFOOT MARCHING TO A BEAT



LITTLEFOOT DOUBLES WITH LAUGHTER

LITTLEFOOT EXCERSISES



LITTLEFOOT GETS A MISCHEVIOUS IDEA

LITTLEFOOT GAZES UP AT HIS LONGNECK MOTHER

JUNIOR TOONERS

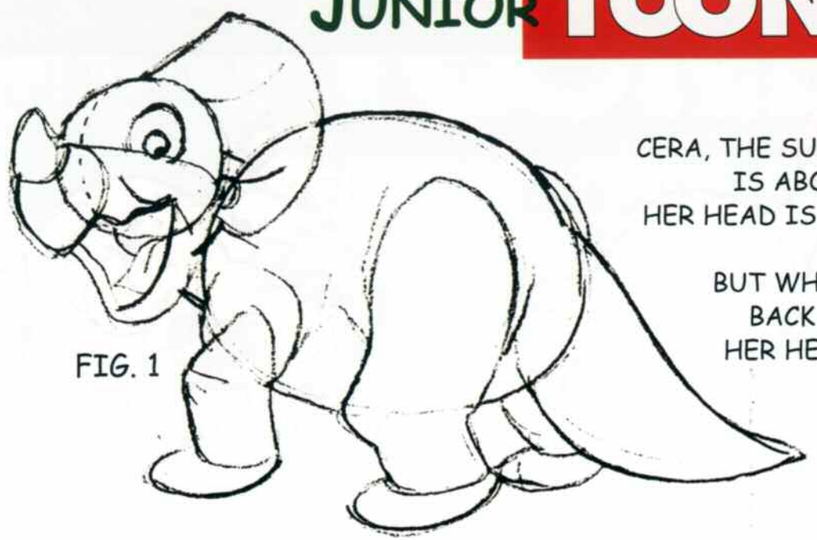


FIG. 1

CERA, THE SURLY TRICERATOPS IS ABOUT 5-YEARS-OLD. HER HEAD IS USUALLY HIGHER THAT HER SPINE, BUT WHEN SHE GETS HER BACK UP, (GETS ANGRY) HER HEAD RIDES LOWER. (SEE FIG. 3)

FIG. 2

VISUALIZE CERA IN YOUR MIND BEFORE YOU BEGIN. (FIG. 1) CONSTRUCT THE HEAD AND BODY WITH A CIRCLE AND AN OVAL. THE LEGS ARE TUBES SITTING ON OVAL SHAPES. (FIG. 2) NOTE: DETAILING IS THE FUN PART. IT'S LIKE ADDING DECORATIONS TO A CHRISTMAS TREE.

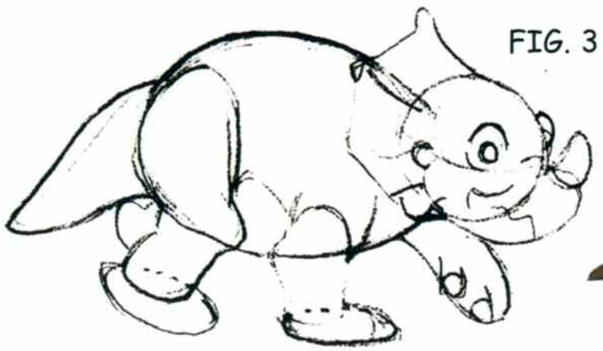
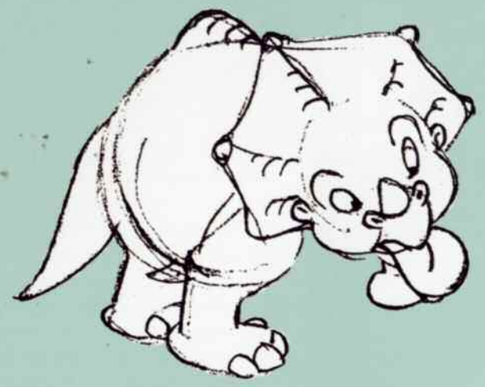
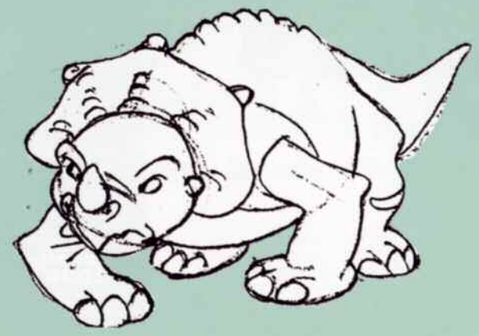


FIG. 3

COLOR

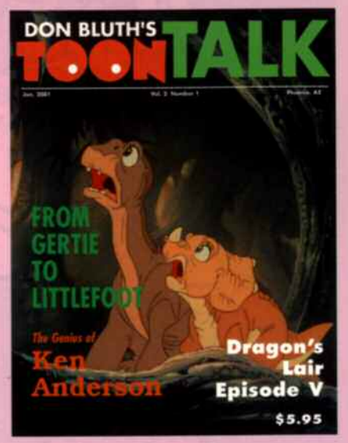
DRAW THESE POSES. . .





ONCE YOU'VE MASTERED THIS PAGE, TRY DRAWING SOME CERA ATTITUDES OF YOUR OWN. MAYBE STAND HER UP ON HER HIND LEGS.

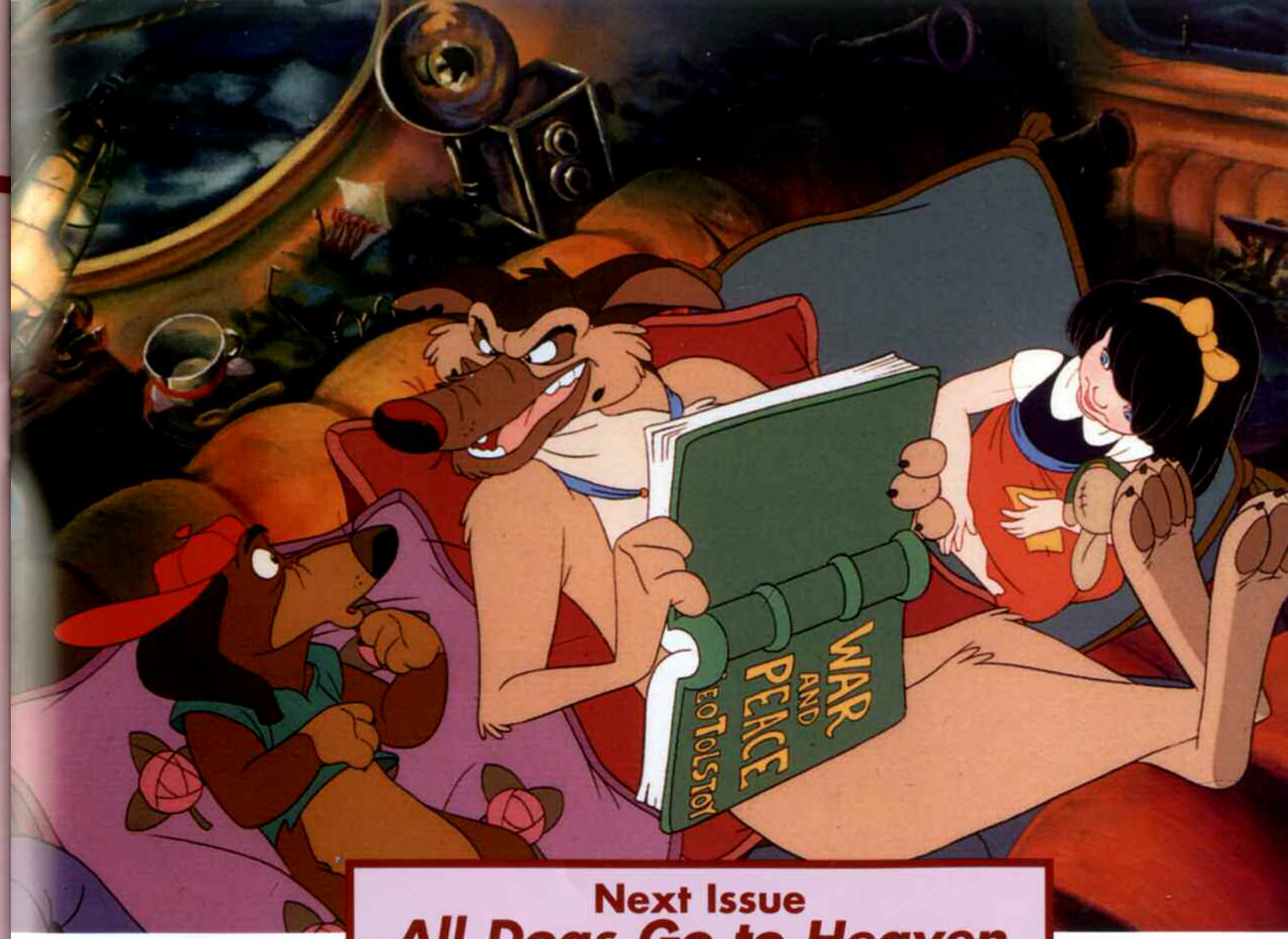
editor'sscoop



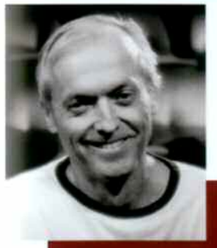
With the shifting of the sands of time, the shut down of Fox Animation Studio becomes a faint recollection, yet, the memories of the friends and loved one's that worked there remain strong in our hearts.
It would seem that any person that is employed in the animation industry might have a gypsy-like lifestyle as he/she wanders the earth in a constant quest for work. Classical animation is in a slump right now. Having said that, however, we are keeping optimistic here in Phoenix. There is a small team of loyal, eager employees who are working diligently towards the next project.

The magazine is doing great. The first issues of *ToonTalk* rolled off the presses in early May 2000 and we had no idea that the fruits of our labors would become so successful. Truly, the many positive responses we receive from Don's fans daily help us stay thoroughly focused as we construct each new magazine for your enjoyment and education. Furthermore, we welcome our readers to pen a letter to us, making any suggestions and comments about the magazine. We want to know how we could improve the publication.

At this time, everybody here at *ToonTalk* magazine would like to take the opportunity and wish all of our readers a prosperous New Year.



Next Issue
All Dogs Go to Heaven



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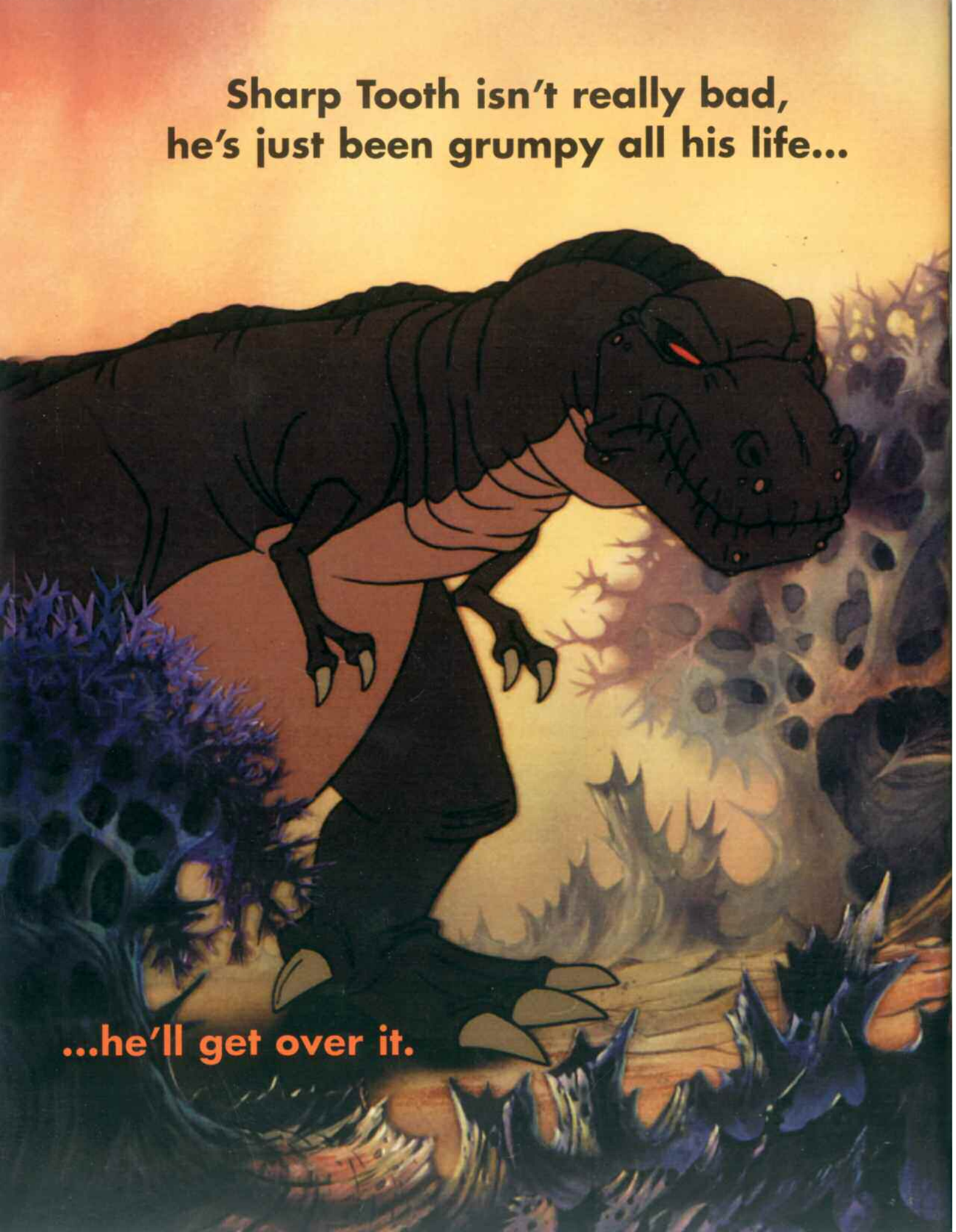
Sharp Tooth isn't really bad,
he's just been grumpy all his life...



...he'll get over it.